

Migratory Game Bird Committee

Meeting Notes for May 16-17, 2017

Navarino Nature Center, Shiocton, WI

Committee Attendance: Jason Fleener, Taylor Finger, Bill Hirt, Pete Engman, Bryan Woodbury, Paul Samerdyke, Brian Glenzinski, Kurt Waterstradt, Peter Ziegler, Joel Brice, Kent Van Horn (Sponsor), Eddie Shea (Asst. Wetland Habitat Specialist)

Guest Attendance: Kevin Teneycke (Nature Conservancy Canada), Stephen Carlyle (Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation), Brandon Braden (DNR), James Robaidek (DNR), Jessica Jaworski (DNR)

Tuesday, May 16

9:30 – Field tour hosted by the Lower Wolf River Bottomlands Natural Resource Area Wildlife crew. Departed from the Sturgeon Camp station and visited flowages at the Herb Behnke Unit, DW Bergstrom Wetland Complex on the Mack Wildlife Area and Navarino Wildlife Area. Sites visited included background information by local staff regarding past, current and proposed habitat work through the state duck stamp program.

Noon – 12:45 – Lunch at the Navarino Nature Center

- The meeting began with Kent Van Horn introduction as the new Wildlife Birds and Habitat Section Chief, and sponsor of the advisory committee. Kent provided updates within DNR Bureau of Wildlife Management, details of DNR alignment efforts, and roles of the advisory committee to the agency.
- Taylor Finger provided updates from the Migratory Game Bird Program, including the hiring of a new assistant, a summary of spring hearing outcomes, a summary of the 2017 Migratory Game Bird season structure, spring waterfowl survey observations, and details regarding the early teal season ad-hoc team
- The three applicants for Canadian waterfowl habitat funding were in attendance and presented half-hour Powerpoint presentations regarding the details of their current proposals and past habitat work done in Canada. Jason opened up the discussion with a summary of state statutes that obligates 33% of stamp revenues to Canadian partners, and a summary of the DU-Canada led field trip last year that showcased work that is being done with Wisconsin stamp dollars. Jason mentioned that approximately \$337,000 is projected to be awarded for Canadian habitat projects during FY18-19. The committee would not make a recommendation on how funds would be allocated during the meeting, but would follow-up afterward with written comments and recommendations to the committee co-chair. The presentations followed with Q&A and discussion within the committee. Discussion points by committee members included:
 - All three proposals have merit to waterfowl production, and each organization involved have good track records in Canada, and often work together in the Prairie-Pothole/Parkland region of southwest Manitoba.

- It may be wise to distribute funds between multiple partners who work with landowners in Canada, to allow more business options to landowners that may appeal to them.
- New applications were formed this year, tailored to Canada habitat projects. They helped provide more details for Canadian projects, however we are still struggling to find apples to apples comparisons regarding the match and leveraging stories between the applicants. Continue to seek ways to clearly explain match and leveraging details with Wisconsin stamp dollars with other funding sources through a consistent method.
- Delta Waterfowl explained that the hen house and restoration components of their proposal will not use Wisconsin duck stamp dollars, but those projects have an indirect connection in the matching/leveraging scheme with other funds. The hen house projects sometimes help promote habitat work with landowners, that encourages them to continue conservation on their land with permanent habitat easements.
- Delta is proposing to use 20% of funding requested for contracted staff to work on easement recruitment, closing, and administration. MHHC would be the title holder of such easements and conduct monitoring throughout the life of the easement.
- Nature Conservancy Canada (NCC) indicated they would accept less funding than they applied for, contrary to what their application says. Other funding sources would have to be secured if Wisconsin contributed stamp dollars to make the fee title acquisition happen. There is not a signed option with the landowner at this time, but they have expressed interest in selling to NCC. If Wisconsin pledged stamp dollars, and if the targeted acquisition fell through, the committee would be amenable to an alternative land sale if the corresponding habitat and acreage is approved by the committee.
- DU Canada has a more diverse package of habitat programs delivered with Wisconsin stamp dollars. A small allocation would also be made to management and maintenance of previous habitat investments.

Wednesday, May 17

8:00 – Meeting commences

- Jason – Update from DNR's Wetland/Water Control Infrastructure Prioritization Team. The team is developing an internal process for assessing and prioritizing all wetland/water control infrastructure that is managed by the agency. The process will identify low priority infrastructure for divestment, and high priority infrastructure to focus resources in the future. Stakeholder and public input will be sought throughout the process. Pete mentioned that a number of dams in the north are built under town or county roads and that we should work with these entities and the DNR Dam Safety program to address hurdles in decommissioning structures, if any of them are deemed low priority and candidate for abandonment at the end of this process. Peter Z. mentioned that the department should consider the type of material that each berm was constructed with and how that might affect the longevity and future investment in existing infrastructure.
- Jason – Update on federal PR (Wildlife Restoration) funding to be allocated toward special wetland projects between FY18-20. A total of \$1.45 million will be allocated to the following

project types: supplement of routine wetland maintenance funding in the CMS portion of the grant, funding for contracting the writing of some IOMPs for DNR owned large dams, funding for wetland/waterfowl habitat in the Lake Michigan Basin through the Wisconsin Stopover Initiative, and funding for major maintenance/repairs on existing DNR managed infrastructure that provide benefits to ducks and hunters. Additional funds will be set aside as a contingency if actual project costs end up higher than anticipated.

- Wisconsin Waterfowl Stamp projects – Carryover of ongoing projects. Jason provided a summary of recently completed projects. Most projects are requesting carry-over into FY18, with wet conditions throughout the state hampering construction efforts. Jason went through projects that have been on the books since FY16 or prior years with justification by local managers to continue project work. The committee was supportive to continue these allocations until project work is complete. These recommendations will be advanced to the Wildlife Policy Team for final approval for carry-over.
- Wisconsin Waterfowl Stamp projects – Requests for FY18-19 funding by DNR staff and cooperators.
 - Jason sought feedback on the new internal application process that integrated pre-proposals and feedback from Wildlife supervisors. Districts ranked all full applications that advanced from their district to the committee. Most pre-proposals advanced to full application within DNR, with the exception of 9 pre-proposals that did not advance between Northern, Southern, and West Central District. Need to follow-up with Northeast district to see how many pre-proposals did not advance. The average amount of time each committee member spent evaluating and scoring proposals was about 8 hours (1 full work day). With at least 9 fewer applications to review, the committee felt the district screening process helped their workload and focused on good applications.
 - Committee members mentioned that it is difficult to evaluate major maintenance projects throughout the state, as the type of work and merit of these proposals is very similar. Recommendations were made to further streamline the process by having the committee only review proposals for restoration work and all cooperator projects, and whatever funds remain to be allocated can be sent to DNR districts for major maintenance that can be distributed at the discretion of the district supervisors. Details would need to be sorted out regarding a method that will determine how the committee will recommend splitting the funds between districts, based on some baseline information regarding the major maintenance project requests. Jason will discuss these concepts with the Wildlife Policy Team (WPT) before we move into the next funding cycle.
 - The committee proceeded to review a list of FY18-19 applications with corresponding mean scores and district rankings. Jason mentioned that \$70K will be taken off the top for Farm Bill Biologist funding. The committee expressed interest in receiving reports or a presentation from PF or NRCS on accomplishments and how biologists are helping to conserve waterfowl habitat in the state. Jason mentioned that up to \$30K of funding from GLIFWC could be available for wild rice related projects in the north. The committee will advance approximately half of the applications on the list to the WPT for

recommended funding, which includes a contingency fund of approximately \$20K for project overages during the biennium. Jason will be in contact with applicants to notify them of the status of their applications and to plan budgets.

- The meeting ended at 11:45. No guests were present at the end of the meeting.